

# Issues in addressing psychological wellbeing and depression in people with aphasia: Need for inter-professional practice.

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## Background

Approximately 440,000 Australians live with the impact of stroke. The economic cost of stroke to the Australian economy is high at \$5 billion per year. The psychological cost of stroke is also high, with common experiences including depression, anxiety, altered identity, and reduced coping. These repercussions affect not only survivors but also their families and wider community. Psychological wellbeing is vital to overall biopsychosocial health; it underpins successful stroke rehabilitation and contributes to managing the economic cost of this condition. Within the population of stroke survivors, 30% will experience aphasia, a communication disability negatively impacting daily life. Negative psychological sequelae are higher in this population compared to stroke survivors without aphasia. Despite acknowledgement of the importance of psychological wellbeing in stroke rehabilitation, little is known about current Australian practice in this area for people with aphasia.

## Aims

1. To systematically evaluate psychotherapeutic or behavioural interventions that target depression in post-stroke aphasia.
2. To describe current Australian practice in addressing the psychological wellbeing of people with aphasia.
3. To identify barriers, facilitators and solutions towards improving basic psychological care and, ultimately, improve rehabilitation outcomes.

## Methods

We integrated results from a recent systematic review and a national practice survey investigating current practice of the stroke multidisciplinary team.

## Results

Speech pathologists identify most of their clients with aphasia to be at high risk of poor psychological health and attempt to support psychological wellbeing directly and indirectly alongside a wide range of health professionals. Evidence is supportive of the effectiveness of intervention to support psychological wellbeing. Barriers to optimal care relate to clinician, client and service factors.

## Discussion

This paper highlights strategies and facilitative attributes of the clinician, service and client that may aid psychological wellbeing and prevent depression in people with post-stroke aphasia. The need for increased interprofessional practice will be discussed.